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HARDY AZALEAS

By Theodore van Veen



No Planting Is Complete Without
Hardy Azaleas

Azaleas are the most showy and gorgeous dwarf flowering plants, covering innumerable shades of bright colors, making them a beautiful sight when in bloom.

Most botanists consider Azaleas inseparable from Rhododendrons, but horticulturalists may be inclined to retain Azaleas for the deciduous species, and to use the Azalea names given in parenthesis. They are highly ornamental wooded plants, chiefly grown for their beautiful flowers, and many species for their handsome foliage.

There is nothing in the garden so charming as

the old Azalea bushes in flower, with their branches in table-like tiers; but the brilliant tints always seem most effective in the subdued light of a shady wood, and happily few shrubs flower better in partial shade than Azaleas. No shrubs are more suitable in getting a true landscape effect than the hardy Azaleas. In fact, no planting is complete without hardy Azaleas.

The hardy Azaleas, called Ghent Azaleas, have sprung chiefly from the wild kinds of North America, *Azalea Nudiflora*, *A. Calendulacea*, and *A. Viscosa*. These and the *A. Pontica* have been so hybridized with the wild Azaleas of Southern Europe, that we have a race in which the colors of the various species are blended and diversified in a great variety of tints, and all intercross so freely that it is difficult to single out a variety identical with any of the wild species. Fifty years ago, Latin names were given to every fine variety, but they could soon be numbered by the hundred. Now, very few sorts are named. Every variation of tints, from the most fiery scarlet to delicate pinks, whites, and dark and pale yellows, is to be had in Ghent Azaleas. A very beautiful one being the *Azalea Ponticum Altaclarence* — bright yellow, almost orange, with large and beautifully built trusses which often measure six inches in diameter; very fragrant. This variety is unsurpassed in landscape work for its luxurious foliage, turning to an almost bright

red in the fall, as well as its masses of bright yellow flowers in early summer.

Azalea Molles—A dwarf deciduous shrub from Japan and China, has given rise to a variety of kinds—yellow, orange, salmon, pink and orange-scarlet being the prevailing colors. It is very hardy and being dwarf, may be grouped as a fore ground to a mass of the tall kinds, or as a foreground of Rhododendrons, or other tall growing shrubs.

Azalea Molles X Sinensis—These Azaleas are excellent for all forcing purposes. Their flowers last longer than those of the common Azalea Molles, and besides, they are larger, more brilliant and beautifully spotted. In landscape planting they take the same position as the A. molles.

Including our native Azaleas are *A. arborescens*, sweet Azalea, fragrant white flowers with pink stamens; *A. calendulacea*, a flame Azalea, ranging in color from light sulphur-yellow to deep red; *A. nudiflora*, Pinxterbloom, a beautiful clear pink, blooming very early; *A. vaseyi*, a pinkshell Azalea, perhaps the most profuse bloomer of all the native species, with white, pink, or deep rose-colored flowers; *A. viscosa*, swamp Azalea, flowers white, sometimes tinged with pink, quite fragrant; and last, but not the least, *A. occidentalis*, Southern Oregon Azalea, a rather

large-growing shrub with masses of large white or blush-white flowers in May, which are very fragrant, probably our best native Azalea.

Soils—All members of the Heath family, including Azaleas, require a soil showing an acid reaction. Because of this special requirement, some sections of this country have thus far been prevented from enjoying the beautiful display furnished by Azaleas, Rhododendrons and Kalmias. However, the hardy Azalea is not quite as hard to please as the other members of the Heath family. In sections where the soil shows an alkaline reaction, gardeners need no longer despair, because, by special soil preparation, these gorgeous plants can be made to thrive. Remove the soil where a planting is contemplated, refilling with humus which shows an acid reaction. Peat or peatmoss is well recommended for that purpose. In this humus, Azaleas, Rhododendrons and other members of the Heath family, can be planted with a fair assurance of satisfactory results.

An authority on gardens in England declares that the hardy Azaleas are, considering their great number and variety, perhaps the most precious flowering shrubs we have; they are fine in form of bush, even when they get little freedom, and superb in color, the foliage in autumn, too, being rich in color in sunny places. England is known for its wonderful gardens, and the gardens are known for their Azaleas.